

REMARKS

This responds to the Office Action mailed on June 19, 2006.

No amendments, cancellations, or additions are made to the claims. As a result, claims 1-26 are now pending in this application.

For the convenience of the Examiner, Applicants' remarks concerning the claims will be presented in the same order in which the Examiner presented them in the Office Action.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants submitted an Information Disclosure Statement and a 1449 Form on May 31, 2002. Applicants respectfully request that initialed copies of the 1449 Forms be returned to Applicants' Representatives to indicate that the cited references have been considered by the Examiner.

Rejection of Claims 1-26 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as Anticipated by Imahori

Claims 1-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Imahori et al. (U.S. 4,572,894).

The rule under 35 U.S.C. §102 is well settled that "A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). MPEP §2131.

Imahori does not appear to disclose all of the structural elements recited in independent claims 1, 9, 15, and 23.

Regarding claim 1, Imahori does not appear to disclose, for example, determining whether a first company has executed a non-disclosure agreement. Nor does Imahori disclose determining whether an applicant is associated with the first company. The passages in Imahori (Abstract; col. 2, lines 36-67; cols. 3-14, lines 1-67) referred to by the Examiner do not appear to describe a computer-implemented method.

Regarding independent claim 9, Imahori does not appear to disclose, for example, a controller to allow participants in a program to exchange information regarding a program when the participants agree to terms in an authorized disclosure letter and when the participants are authorized according to authorization data.

Regarding independent claim 15, Imahori does not appear to disclose, for example, an interface screen that allows a user to enter a non-disclosure agreement number.

Regarding independent claim 23, Imahori does not appear to disclose, for example, a processor and memory, comprising an authorized disclosure letter, authorization data, and a controller to execute on the processor to allow participants in a program to exchange information regarding a program when the participants agree to terms in the authorized disclosure letter and when the participants are authorized according to the authorization data.

For the above reasons, independent claims 1, 9, 15, and 23 should be found to be allowable over Imahori, and Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1, 9, 15, and 23 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Imahori be withdrawn.

Claims 2-8, which depend directly or indirectly from claim 1 and incorporate all of the limitations therein, are also asserted to be allowable for the reasons presented above.

Claims 10-14, which depend from claim 9 and incorporate all of the limitations therein, are also asserted to be allowable for the reasons presented above.

Claims 16-22, which depend directly or indirectly from claim 15 and incorporate all of the limitations therein, are also asserted to be allowable for the reasons presented above.

Claims 24-26, which depend from claim 23 and incorporate all of the limitations therein, are also asserted to be allowable for the reasons presented above.

Additional Elements and Limitations

Applicants consider additional elements and limitations of the claims to further distinguish over the cited references, and Applicants reserve the right to present arguments to this effect at a later date.

Conclusion

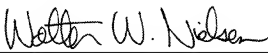
Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-26 are in condition for allowance, and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicants' attorney, Ann M. McCrackin (located in Minneapolis, Minnesota) at (612) 349-9592 or Applicants' below-signed attorney (located in Phoenix, Arizona) to facilitate prosecution of this application.

If necessary, please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

Respectfully submitted,

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By their Representatives,
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